

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCPS use only

received

date entered

**1. Name**

historic Persinger House

# 3-18

and/or common Persinger House

**2. Location**

street & number Route 788

N/A not for publication

city, town Covington

N/A vicinity of

congressional district 6th (M. Caldwell Butler)

state Virginia

code 51

county Alleghany

code 005

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mr. and Mrs. Calvin P. Wright

street & number Merry Go Round Farm

city, town Covington

N/A vicinity of

state Virginia 24426

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alleghany County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Covington

state Virginia

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Virginia Historic Landmarks  
Commission Survey

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1977, 1980

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, 221 Governor Street

city, town Richmond

state Virginia 23219

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Persinger House is scenically sited on the bank of Potts Creek among the mountains of Alleghany County. The house is located several miles south of Covington, off State Route 788. The original portion of the house is log, built in the last quarter of the 18th century. The three-bay structure was enlarged in 1888 so that its present form is a two-story, six-bay, single-pile house with a gable roof covered with standing-seam sheet metal. Fronting the entire main (south) facade is a two-level gallery supported by chamfered posts. The gallery is decorated with simple cut-out friezes and a Chinese lattice railing on the second level. The house is set on a low, stone foundation and has stone exterior end chimneys. During this century, a kitchen outbuilding was connected to the house by a hyphen. The kitchen also has a stone chimney, but the stack is of brick. The house is presently covered with weatherboards; some old beaded weatherboards remain under the gallery and on the west end.

In its original form, the Persinger House had a hall-parlor plan. The main entrance is still into the former hall. The entrance has a replacement door and a plain architrave. The windows throughout the main part of the house have 6/6 sash which are also set in plain architraves. The entrance into the 1888 section has a multi-paned transom and sidelights and a paneled door. The first story of the rear is sheltered by a screened porch. A board-and-batten springhouse projects off the kitchen.

In what was the original hall is an ambitious, but provincial, Federal mantel of carved walnut (now painted). The mantel is decorated with various types of panels and a deeply molded shelf. Skirting three walls of the room is a plain paneled wainscot. The wall opposite the mantel is a vertically paneled walnut (painted) partition with beveled joints, a most unusual treatment of this type of partition. The door in the partition is hung on HL hinges. The windows in the original section appear to have been lengthened when the house was enlarged. The remaining room or "parlor" in the original section has had its north end partitioned off for a bathroom.

In the 1888 section is a plain, single-run stair with square balusters and an open stringer. Beyond the stair hall is a room now used as a bedroom. It is embellished with plain paneled wainscoting and a naive Federal-style mantel.

The house is maintained in good condition as rental property. A late 19th-century barn stands near the house.

RCC/CL

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property consists of three acres. This acreage includes the main house and a barn to the east of the house. It is a fraction of the 283-acre tract recorded in the Botetourt County land tax books as Jacob Persinger's property in 1782 and recorded in the Alleghany County will books as inherited by John Persinger in 1841. The land is presently subdivided and used partially for mobile homes; hence, the nomination of only three acres.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Folklore

**Specific dates** last quarter 18th century; 1888 addition **Builder/Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Persinger House is one of the oldest and best known of Alleghany County's pioneer dwellings. The house is significant for its associations with its builder, Jacob Persinger, a member of an early settler family who as a child was captured by the Indians and later adopted an Indian life style. The various stories arising from the event as well as from Persinger's later life have become part of the folklore of the region. Architecturally, the house is an interesting vernacular structure. The original log section was built in the last quarter of the 18th century and was expanded to its present form around 1888. A vertically paneled partition wall in the log section is distinct for its use of beveled joints, a feature rarely seen in the trim of simple log houses of western Virginia.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Persinger family is among the oldest in the Valley. Jacob Persinger, Sr., (1716-1789) came to Pennsylvania from Switzerland in 1735. He arrived in western Virginia with his wife and family about 1750. During that decade, the dangers to settlers in the Valley were great, due primarily to the outbreak of the French and Indian War. By 1756 the General Assembly had ordered the establishment of a chain of forts through the Valley frontier, starting at a point seven miles below Warm Springs in Bath County on Jackson's River. It is thought that Persinger settled near the head of Roaring Run where he built a grist mill later known as Rook's Mill. He served with Dickinson's Rangers in 1757, the year of the reputed kidnapping of his wife and son by Indians. The tale of Persinger's son, Jacob Jr., has become a part of the folklore of the Valley. While many stories both real and fictitious are told of the courage and resourcefulness of the settlers against the Indians, Persinger's story seems unique. Not only does the tale deal with the boy's captivity but also with his subsequent search for his identity after his return to civilization.

According to the Jacob Persinger legend, during Jacob Sr.'s absence in 1757, an Indian war party came to Roaring Run and took Rebecca Persinger and her son prisoners. One version of the event states: "A group of pursuers followed a trail left by Rebecca by tearing off bits of clothing and leaving them hanging on bushes along the way...the trail was lost at Paint Bank and Rebecca was never heard from again..."<sup>1</sup>

The story continues:

In 1763 as a result of the Treaty of Paris, Chief Cornstalk of the Shawnees was required to give up his prisoners in an exchange that took place near Iron Gate, Va. Jacob Persinger Sr. claimed the 10 year old boy and gave him the name Jacob, Jr. The young boy did not like the ways of the white man and ran away to return to the Indians several times, only to be returned upon orders of the chief. Jacob Jr. doubted that he was the son of Jacob Sr.<sup>2</sup>

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Alleghany County Records: Land Tax Books, 1822-1900; Will Book 2.  
Botetourt County Records: Deed Book 1, 2, 5; Land Tax Books 1782-1822; Will Book A.  
McAllister, Hugh Maffitt. Historical Sketch of Alleghany County, Va. Clifton Forge, Virginia, 1902.  
Morton, Oren B. A Centennial History of Alleghany County, Va. Dayton, Virginia, 1923.

## 10. Geographical Data

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

Acreage of nominated property 3 acres

Quadrangle name Jordan Mines, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 1 7 5 8 2 9 0 0 4 1 7 4 7 1 0  
Zone Easting Northing

B                          
Zone Easting Northing

C                                             

D                                             

E                                             

F                                             

G                                             

H                                             

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at a point on N side of State Route 1601 about 1350' WNW of intersection with State Route 788; thence extending about 700' W then SW along said side to E side of Potts Creek; thence extending about 400' NNW along said side; thence extending about 600' E; thence extending about 150' S to N side of Route 1601, point of origin.(See # 7 for boundary justification)

state N/A code    county N/A code   

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date December 1980

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

   national X state    local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director  
title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date DEC 16 1980

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

Persinger House, Alleghany County, Virginia

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 8,9

Page 1

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

As in all the different versions of the story, Persinger's life with the Shawnee became embellished through its telling from generation to generation. All stories agree that he wanted to remain with his captors and preferred Indian ways throughout his life. In this vein the tale continues, "In 1778 he married Mary Kimberlin. She refused to live in his teepee so he built her what was reported to have been one of the finest farm houses in the county."<sup>3</sup>

Persinger served in the Revolution and is listed as a corporal in the Virginia Militia. According to tradition, Persinger was a farmer but preferred hunting and fishing to the agrarian life. He died in 1841, leaving his son John, "the whole of my estate both real and personal except as hereinafter named..."<sup>4</sup> John died tragically in 1842, killed by a slave, "Blue", who became the first person to be executed legally in Alleghany County. Lee Persinger, Jacob's great nephew, became the sole owner of the 283-acre property in 1858.

As originally constructed, the Persinger House was built of log. The mantel in the earliest (west) parlor was added at a later date, ca. 1820. The screen of vertical panels is presumably original. In 1888 Lee Persinger enlarged the house by an addition to the east, when the present weatherboards and two-level porch were also added. The house remained in the ownership of descendants of the builder until the 1970s. It was purchased in 1977 by Calvin Wright, a great, great, great, great nephew of Jacob Persinger.

VDS/RCC

<sup>1</sup>Howard Humphries, "The Persingers of Alleghany County, Va. 1750-1965." Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission files, unpublished manuscript.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"Jacob Persinger", unpublished letter, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission files.

<sup>4</sup>Alleghany County Will Book 1, p. 113.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Pritts, Joseph, compiler. Mirror of Olden Time Border Life, also History of Virginia to which are added Personal Narratives. Abingdon, Virginia, 1849.

Richmond, Va. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Archives, Alleghany County, Persinger House, File # 03-18. Howard Humphries, "The Persingers of Alleghany County, Va. 1750-1965." "Jacob Persinger," unpublished letter.

Thwaites, Reuben Gold, ed. Chronicles of Border Warfare with reflections, anecdotes, etc. by Alexander Scott Withers. Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Co., 1895 (originally published 1831).

